

# *The Ballarat Naturalist*

July 2001



## **Out and About**

**Speaker: Ken Hammond**

Following the sudden death of Brian Andrews who was to have spoken on fungi at the June meeting (and he was filling in for an indisposed Tom May), Ken kindly agreed to present a program on birds seen on his travels in Australia and overseas.

Beginning in Scotland, there were Guillemots, Fulmars and Greater Black-backed Gulls nestling on cliff ledges on the Isle of Handa, and at the historic Pass of Killiecrankie, Black-headed Gulls. Formerly restricted to areas south of the River Thames, they have now spread widely in the UK, especially inland. Puffins seen on the Farne Islands prompted Ken to marvel at the way they can carry ten fish crosswise in their beaks.

In NW Australia there were Black-necked Storks (Jabiru), Cattle Egrets and salt-water crocodiles; in the SW of Western Australia Ken missed out on the Noisy Scrub-bird but saw plenty of 28-Parrots and Western Rosellas. Moving to Central Australia we admired Major Mitchell Cockatoos, Budgerigars and Blackfaced Woodswallows, followed by a glorious carpet of Sturt's Desert Pea. Several photos were taken in the Desert Park near Alice Springs, an excellent way of getting close-up shots of otherwise difficult subject matter.

Amidst spectacular rock formations, including the Devil's Marbles and Katherine Gorge, there were Spinifex Pigeons and the Great Bowerbird, Blue-faced Honey-eaters, and Blue-winged Kookaburra. A visit to Kakadu National Park resulted in shots of the prolific bird life, especially on Yellow Waters. Pied Herons were plentiful at the Darwin Treatment Plant, whilst at Keep River a spectacular boab tree was full of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. Near Winton Ken had visited Lark Quarry with its dinosaur footprints, interpreted as a group of small individuals fleeing a larger predator.



Budgerigars (Hill)

There were Green Pygmy Geese in the "Rainforest Habitat" at Port Douglas, and still in Queensland there was a fascinating shot of Fairy Martins' nests under the eaves right around a building. Ken estimated there were several hundred "dwellings".

Black-browed and Shy Albatrosses with Cape Petrels were the reward for visiting Port McDonnell in South Australia, but one of the more unusual occurrences was a group of Pied Oystercatchers grazing with Kangaroos in Cleland Conservation Park! Further round the coast at Port Lincoln was a tall pile of sticks denoting an osprey's nest.

To the dry country of Wyperfeld, and here Ken saw Regent Parrots, a Southern Scrub Robin and Tawny Frogmouth—the latter very well camouflaged. Then, using slides taken by a friend, Ken showed us a Golden Whistler, Brown Tree-creeper and a lovely shot of a Rufous Fantail at its nest.

Ken concluded with shots of local species such as the Blue-billed Duck, Yellow-tufted, White-naped and Fuscous Honey-eaters, a Grey Fantail and a Yellow Robin. A head shot of the ubiquitous Emu reminded us all of the habits of the Tower Hill denizens which are inclined to poke their heads into open car windows!

Some slides of attractive and interesting fungi wrapped up the show, and thanks to Ken for his great shots and amusing anecdotes.



Sturt's Desert Pea  
(Cronin)

Editor.

## Talbot & Amherst—Excursion

Fifteen members led by Claire Dalman proceeded through Bald Hills for a preliminary stop at Long Point Flora Reserve located at the end of Gillies Street. It is a 3 ha. site adjoining an old quarry and has remnant vegetation unique to the Ballarat region including Candlebark, Black She-oak, Silver Banksia, Yellow Box, Blackwood, Hedge Wattle and Small Grass Trees. Belinda Taylor observed Galahs harassing a Black-shouldered Kite, and John Gregurke commented upon the nesting of Spotted Pardalotes in previous years in the sandy cliff. In spring *Tetralthea* spreads carpets of deep pink across the ground.



(Hall)

We passed through Clunes, then through the outskirts of Talbot to the site of the *Stoney Creek Oil Products* Company's operations tucked away in a secluded clearing in the box-ironbark forest. The proprietor Coral Davies



described to us the business run with her husband Fred i.e. the manufacture of Flax-seed Oil and by-products which are marketed as dietary supplements. A by-product which is 34% protein and much sought after is Linseed Meal, in this case a stockfeed supplement. We were shown over the factory and premises maintained in an hygienic, spotless condition. Some product is exported.

Jojoba oil is also prepared. I recall this product was becoming very fashionable as the '70s became the '80s and the organic, close-to-nature age was ushered in. Still going strong!

We had our lunch at the site of the old Stoney Creek Primary School, a site delineated in the bush by a post-and-rail fence made in part with that most revolutionary of inventions, the chainsaw. This school closed in 1916. Two mature Sugar Gums grow here and also in the yard are stone garden formations including a map of Australia complete with state borders. These are demarcated with sharp rocks—a relic, built to last, of a nationalistic age.

The story goes that the Headmaster used to help his pupils to plant seedlings corresponding to the floral emblems of the states, no doubt timed to blossom in the spring in the respective places in the map outline! For those in the know there is a similar map of Australia embedded in the ground (this time using railway sleepers). It is in Dowling St. just to the south of the Wendouree Swimming Pool and installed at the time of Australia's Bicentenary.

Our next stop was at Mark and Shani Phillip's Sajana Lavender Patch at Amherst where Shani gave directions to the original site of a Chinese Joss House and Bath House, a relic of the town's boom days. Shani also gave directions to another local landmark—Aboriginal wells—potholes in the rock which collect surface run-off and were used for drinking purposes.

Following this we stopped at Amherst Geological Reserve N2.

"This reef is an outstanding example of a prominently outcropping quartz vein. Such outcrops were once common but most were systematically mined for gold. The reef outcrops as a massive blow up to 6m high that forms a northerly trending strike ridge about 300m long. It was prospected by surface costeaning, shafts and an adit..... Gold bearing veins were reported from the tunnel on the eastern side. That the reef remains intact at the surface indicates that it is largely barren." (Creswick 1:100,000 Mapsheet Geological Report DNRE pub. 2000).

We all made the ascent; a shaft, with safety netting, a relic of former days, was observed at the summit. Pat Murphy pointed out orchid leaves here, coloured purple underneath.

On our return we perused the historical information and photos and signed the Visi-

tors' Book at the Lavender Patch, then headed off to Ballarat, but not before an afternoon tea break at Amherst Bushland Reserve 180, opposite Amherst Cemetery.

Tony Johns.



### June Meeting Points

- The Vice President, Greg Binns opened the meeting and paid tribute to the contribution made to Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat by Brian Andrews who died on 29/5/2001. Brian had edited the Newsletter, served on the Committee and recently accepted the position of President. His latest interest was fungi and he willingly shared his knowledge with club members. Brian was remembered by a period of silence. Claire Dalman and Carol Hall arranged to send a floral tribute to Joan and Kevin.
- Environment Victoria affiliation approved by committee.
- Wombat Forest: Frank Harrap has written a submission to DNRE recommending closure of some tracks and an unofficial camping area.
- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Tree: That Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat plant a Wollemi Pine in the Ballarat Botanic Gardens to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Club and pay \$350 for a commemorative plaque. Moved: Claire Dalman; Seconded: Avis Barlow; Carried.
- World Environment Day: City of Ballarat has requested assistance with fauna survey at North Gardens Wetland, Nerrina Wetland and Pryor Park. The following members volunteered: Pat and Bill Murphy, Peter Billing, Tony Johns, John Mildren, Belinda Taylor, Lyndsay Fink, Helen Burgess, Ken Hammond, Jack Netherway, John Gregurke. The WVFNCA 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary plaque will be relocated and a Swamp Gum will be planted in North Gardens Wetland.

### Show and Tell.

- Carol Hall: Book "Birds of the Night" by David Hollands with photographs of Powerful Owls.

### Field Reports

- Carol Hall: 120-150 White-eyed Duck on Lake Wendouree, May 20.
- John Mildren: 38 White-eyed Duck on northern edge of Lake.
- Lyndsay Fink: Good rains have filled dams around Meredith and attracted

- Great Egret, Yellow Spoonbill and many Wood Duck.
- Pat Murphy: Many birds on small patch of water at Lake Learmonth.
- Ken Hammond: Many Striated Pardalotes at Maryborough; a dead bird of the Yellow Spotted race was found.

## Mid-month Excursion: Hepburn Regional Park

Five members braved grey chilly weather to visit three locations within the Park.

**A. Basalt Block.** Two kilometres past Eganstown cemetery on the Daylesford Road is a left turn signposted Basalt Road, a bitumen and gravel road which follows a partly dissected tongue of basalt through the surrounding Ordovician rocks. It emerges at Shepherd's Flat opposite *Lavandula*, the lavender farm. The basalt areas are cleared and support farming activities, but the Ordovician outcrops have been thoroughly explored for gold since its discovery in the Daylesford area in 1851.

About ½km along Boats Rd ( which leads to Charlesford Diggings ) we explored an area near the head of "Keep it Dark Gully" which contained an old dam, water race, shafts with pit props and an adit extending perhaps 20m into the hillside. After several wet days there was a great variety of fungi (here and at other stops ) including *Mycena austrororida*, a variety of *Calocera* sp. with minute yellow fingers ½cm high, and a red variety of *Ascomycetes* sp. with cups 1cm across.

Thanks to nearby Radiata pine plantations there was a good sprinkling of pine seedlings, but equally there was a variety of ground cover and shrubs such as *Tetratheca*, Silver Wattle, Juniper Wattle *A. aculeatissima*, with Common Heath (pink and white) *Epacris impressa* beginning to bloom. The greenish-yellow flowers of Common Correa *C. reflexa* were seen on closer inspection and the leaves of a *Hardenbergia* and a *Platylobium* were identified, as was Small-leaf Parrot Pea *Dillwynia phyllicoides*.

Further along Basalt Road, where the badly eroded Italian Gully intersects the bitumen, we found Candlebarks *E. rubida* gleaming palely amongst the numerous Brown Stringybarks *E. baxteri*, Golden and Silver Wattles *A. pycnantha* & *dealbata*, Austral Indigo *Indigofera australis* and Wirilda *A. retinodes*. Seedlings of Hedge Wattle *A. paradoxa* were found but many young shrubs had been nibbled.

### **B. The Blowhole**

Accessed from 18th Street in Hepburn Springs, this feature is a diversion tunnel where goldminers blasted a hole through the narrow neck of a meander on Sailors Creek in order to drain the river bed and assist their search for gold. Explanatory signage with maps of the feature as well as the whole of the Park with its walking tracks was clearly displayed. We found a steady flow of water pouring through the tunnel, form-

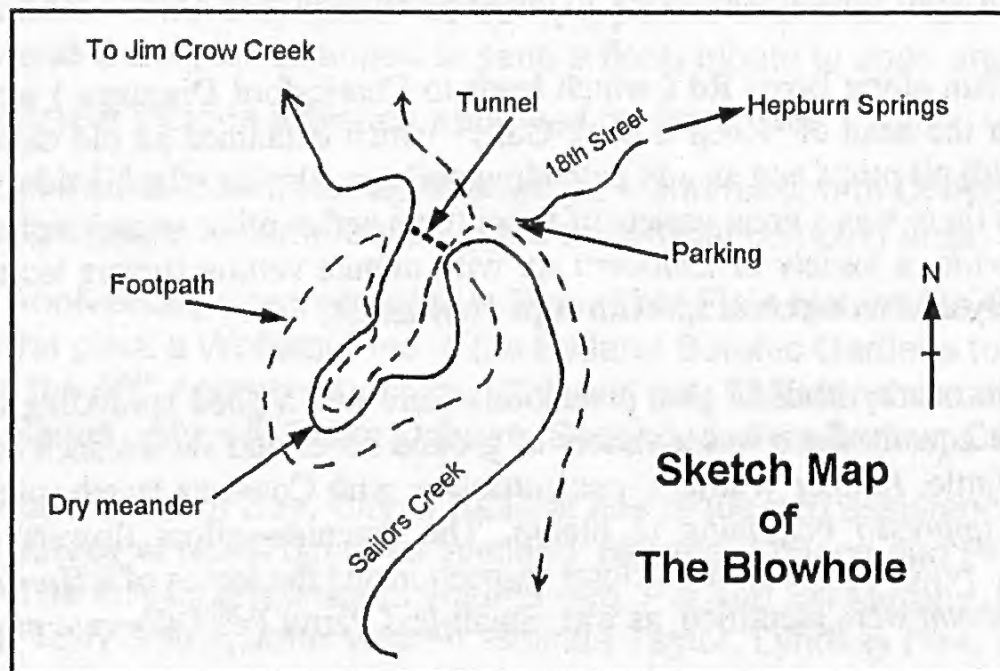


ing a small waterfall as it joined the lower stretch of river. Winter is the best time to see this in action.

The boardwalk across the old river bed had been carried away, perhaps by a flash flood after the heavy rain in April. Debris was trapped against shrubs and saplings were flattened.

The forest here is secondary, the hillsides having been denuded by goldminers. The vertically tilted Ordovician strata exposed in the river bed and in the tunnel varied from massive blocks to fine layers. These sediments are interpreted in the Geological Report as turbidites—layers deposited by underwater avalanches of sediments.

Along the bank were Clustered Everlastings *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*, Sweet Bursaria *B. spinosa* and Blackwood *A. melanoxylon*. Up on the top of the spur within the meander were Brown & Red Stringybarks *E. baxteri* & *macrorhynca*, and Red Box *E. polyanthemos*. Mats of Scented Sundew *Drosera whittakerii* grew beside the track.



### C. Sailors Falls

Leaving the cars at the roadside pull-off we walked to the vantage point overlooking the two waterfalls tumbling over the edge of the basalt. The spray was eroding the softer rocks below, thus undermining the massive basalt blocks and causing an overhang.

Soft tree ferns *Dicksonia antarctica* are found within the shady moist gully immediately below the Falls, and the rocks are covered with moss. Austral Mulberry *Hedycarya angustifolia* grew below tall Messmates *E. obliqua* and Manna Gums *E. vimi-*

*nalis*, while higher up the slopes we saw Candlebark and Broad-leaved Peppermint *E. rubida* & *dives*. Here we saw the most birdlife for the day: Red-browed Finches, White-browed Scrub-wrens and Superb Blue Wrens hopped amongst the undergrowth while a Yellow Robin and a Grey Fantail flew higher up in the understorey.

We tasted the mineral spring found further north in the creek but no-one was impressed by the flavour! The track along the creek follows a water race before climbing the valley side and returns via a 1.5 km loop along the upper slopes to the Falls and carpark.

Editor.

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### VALE Brian Andrews

Club members and friends were saddened by the news that President Brian Andrews had died suddenly at his Durham Lead home on the morning of May 29th. Brian had been resolutely struggling with illness and treatment for some years but his death came as a shock to all.

Before immigrating to Australia in his late teens, in August 1963, Brian had developed a love for outdoor activity and natural history and continued that interest here. In his professional career he taught Maths and Science in secondary schools.

Brian and his family had connections with the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat through his mother-in-law, a former doyen of the club, the late Stella Bedgood, and on his forced retirement through ill health Brian, Joan and Kevin became regular active members.

Brian took an enthusiastic and studied approach to the areas on which he focussed, in particular the study of fungi. He was editor of the Newsletter from December 1997 to March 2001 (was it coincidence that his first edition featured the St. Andrew's Cross Spider?), and introduced features such as relevant posers and problems. He served as a committee member for three and a half years, organised numerous excursions and for the three months of this current year presided over the Club. Brian will be remembered as a committed member who contributed much to the Club and its objectives.

Condolences to Joan, Kevin, Jenny and her family.

Greg Binns.

(Potter)



## Casemoths (Psychidae)

Are casemoths less prevalent than in days of yore? Observations of these interesting insects seem to be a rarity these days. A vacated "case" of the Faggot or Lictor Casemoth (see diagrams) was found on a track during a recent Club excursion and generated some discussion and conflicting notions on these rather mysterious and unusual creatures. (The following notes are summarised from that remarkably comprehensive reference *Australian Nature Studies* by Dr. J. A. Leach, first published some 80 years ago.)



Male



Female

As the caterpillar lives for more than 12 months it needs protection and produces a silk case suspended from a plant. Some species use sticks to decorate the case, another leaves, and the Ribbed Casemoth produces a complete silk case with ribs to keep it apart. The female of most species, never leaves the case, is wingless, and lays small dark eggs within. About mid-March the young larvae appear and each lowers itself by thread to the ground where it quickly makes a case of silk, sand grains and scraps of bark and leaves. They wander, and eventually build a distinctive case in which to pupate.



Ribbed Case Moth



Female Lictor case, young emerging.

The male emerges from the bottom of its case in late summer, with fern-like feelers and long narrow wings. The female is fertilised within her case. Throughout her life she remains vertical, only emerging enough to walk with the case in search of materials and food (plants). The Silvereye, the Shrike-tit and the Mistletoe Bird are said to extract the larvae from the cases.



Male Lictor case.

Greg Binns.



Fifteen members enjoyed a weekend by the sea at the comfortable "Star of the Sea". To start our exploration 9 of us drove to Point Bunbury looking for shells etc. John Mildren was searching for Cowries—he found two. Shells were found only in a small area. The tide was not conducive to reef exploration and the wind from the sea made



Cowrie  
(Hill)

huge mesmeric breakers. We went to the wharf where one of the fishing boats had just tied up, hoping to purchase some fish. The seas were too rough for fishing so we were out of luck.

By evening we had 15 members. Some looked at the numerous reference books covering all aspects of the area, both shore and forest; others watched TV.

On our way to Castle Cove we stopped to look at the backwater of the Barham River where there were Wood Duck, Black Cormorants and Sacred Ibis. A newly born Aberdeen Angus calf was seen having its first feed.

Castle Cove is on the western side of Cape Otway. The wind was from the shore so the seas were not as spectacular as the night before and there was a big swell. Driving through the Aire valley a lone Wedge-tailed Eagle was seen gliding over the river. Observation of birds on the wetlands was difficult, partly by distance and by the clumps of reeds. We had a look at the sea and cliffs from the look-out and then descended to the beach via the steps. Grey sandstone cliffs with interesting patterns towered over us on the western side of the cove. Cuttlefish both large and small and broken were caught in the washed-up seaweed. Greg found the skull of the Hutton's Shearwater. The sandstone at the eastern end was a yellow ochre colour. Evidence of oil was found in the sand.

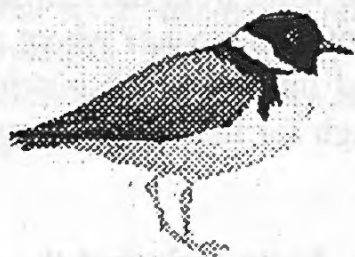


We then headed for Beauchamp Falls via Lavers Hill which is no longer a sleepy settlement. Compared to the coast the forest was full of wind. The damp wood made lighting a fire very frustrating. After lunch we walked to the Falls—the sign indicated a 1.5 hour walk, which it was. The spectacular Beauchamp Falls is on the Deppeler Creek which is a tributary of the Aire River. Blackwood, Beech and Mountain Ash trees towered over a variety of ferns. Mosses and fungi were found in the litter and on tree trunks. We found some of the black shells of the carnivorous Otway snails, but no live snails—all shells had been pecked at, with the centre removed.

Evidence of seriously strong winds was seen with the tops of the tall eucalypts snapped off. Birds were scarce, only a few were heard. We continued on the round trip and returned via Turton's Track—an unsealed winding and interesting road.

In the evening some of the group participated in some old fashioned party games, testing their skills in unscrambling jumbled letters and other games. All received a small gift for taking part.

Sunday saw most of us pack up and clear the rooms before departing for Marengo where we were to walk along the beach. After the car shuttle we walked from east to west because of the wind. Loose sand was blown low over the beach and the tops of the breakers ended in a mist. At times it was difficult to walk against the wind. Four Hooded Plovers ran in front of us and we saw Singing Honeyeaters, Greenfinches, Blue Wrens and Willy Wagtails which fluttered amongst the shrubs on the dunes. We saw a few Australian Fur Seals resting on the rocks off the coast. Many feathers were found and as at Castle Cove we collected rubbish, mostly plastic and rope.



Hooded Plover  
(Cayley)



Australian Fur Seal  
(Hill)

We then went to the top of the hill and with the aid of Greg's telescope we saw Australian Gannets, one Black-browed Albatross, and possibly a Yellow-nosed Albatross. Silver Gulls fought against the wind as well as a Crested Tern.

And so ended an enjoyable weekend of seeing the sea in some of its moods. Our thanks to John Mildren for leading us to some of his favourite beauty spots.

Helen Burgess.

Five members chose to stay an extra night, so on the Sunday afternoon we piled into Greg's Landrover and went to Crayfish Bay. After the gloriously sunny morning, clouds threatened and as we arrived (grateful for the 4WD) a heavy shower blotted out the view and we sheltered till it passed. The wind was still gusting gale force as we explored the bay, beachcombing and trying to keep an eye on the encroaching waves; Claire and Genny both copped wet feet! We saw more Hooded Plovers, bringing the total for the weekend to nine. The grassy area at the foot of the cliff in Crayfish Bay has been revegetated, including Casuarinas and Westringias.

While the Dalmans departed for Peterborough on the Monday morning, the Binns and Carol Hall left in the direction of Lorne; more Gannets were seen along the coast and eight Sooty Oystercatchers searched for food on the shore platform just south of Von Mueller Creek, between Skenes Creek and Kennet River. On arrival at Lorne, the calm surface of Louttit Bay belied the stormy conditions around the Cape.

Editor.



## **V.F.N.C.A. Spring Camp-out**

## **The Grampians**

**26th - 30th October 2001**

Hosted by the Ararat and District FNC, the camp-out will be based at Camp Acacia in Hall's Gap. The camp has been booked from Friday 26 until Tuesday 30 but activities have been organised for the weekend only.

Up to 90 people can be accommodated in 15 rooms, all of which are heated and carpeted. Toilet blocks are at the end of one of the dormitories. People will need to bring their own linen and sleeping bags/duonas. All rooms have some bunks and this may not suit everyone. There are 40 ground level beds available and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

The program will include day and half day trips in the Grampians and surrounding areas such as the Stawell Ironbarks and Jallukar Forest.

Approx. cost:

Accommodation and meals:

Fri. dinner - Tues. lunch \$170-\$175

Fri. dinner - Sun. lunch \$100

Meals only: Fri - Tues \$110

Fri - Sun \$70

Attending but not staying or eating at Camp Acacia: \$30

Booking forms will be available in due course.

Helen Burgess has tentatively booked a cottage in Hall's Gap sleeping up to 8 people which would give greater privacy, with self cooking facilities. If you are interested in this alternative, please speak to Helen. The cost of \$150 for Friday and Saturday nights would be shared between participants.

## **Labour Day Weekend 2002**

The FNCV has been rostered to organise the annual get together of the VFNCA over Labour Day weekend next year. The weekend will take place at Tylden near Kyneton and survey the surrounding areas.

**Please note** that this was first advertised as taking place at the Lady Northcote Camp at Rowsley near Bacchus Marsh.



## Calendar

### July

- Fri. 6      Meeting: Ray Draper - Growling Grass Frog.
- Sun. 8      Excursion: Canadian Forest & Mike Healy's Fernery. Leader Les Hanrahan.
- Fri 13      Mid-month Excursion: Talbot Reservoir & Lexton Streamside Reserve.
- Wed 25      Committee Meeting @ Greg Binns',      7.30pm.
- Mon. 30      Booklet Meeting @ John Gregurke's 3pm.

### August

- Fri. 3      Meeting: Femmie Kraaijeveld - Mating Behaviour of Antechinus.
- Sun. 5      Excursion: Don Henderson - Natural and Social History of Creswick.

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<b>Supper Duty for -</b>	<b>July:</b>	Carol Hall & Kay Preston
	<b>August:</b>	Pat and Bill Murphy

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### Committee

**President** ..... Mrs. Carol Hall

**Vice-President** ..... Mr. Greg Binns

**Secretary** ..... Mr. John Gregurke

**Treasurer** ..... Mr. Bob Curtain

Miss Helen Burgess.....

Miss Maureen Christie.....

Mrs. Claire Dalman.....

Mr. Lyndsay Fink.....

Mrs. Carol Hall (Editor).....

Mr. Les Hanrahan.....

Mr. John Mildren.....

Ms. Gail Whyte.....

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Editor:

**Website:** [www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au](http://www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au) Click on *Local Info*.

**Meetings** are held at the Ballarat Horticulture Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

**Excursions:** Depart from Creswick Plaza, Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.

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